

# Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile

# Geography: The Nile Valley

- Egypt is surrounded by the desert.
- The desert protects Egypt from invasion and limits where people could settle.
- Farming villages dotted the narrow band of land watered by the Nile.
- “Black Land” - rich irrigated area about 10 miles wide
- “Red Land” - sun-baked desert

- Farmers grew wheat and flax (fibers used for clothing)
- Egypt produced large amounts of food for thousands of years.
- Known as the “breadbasket” - exported food to the Mediterranean world.
- Nile rises in the highlands of Ethiopia and the lakes of central Africa.
- Nile floods annually and soaks the land with water and deposits a layer of silt. (soil)

- People built dikes, reservoirs, and irrigation ditches to channel the rising river. They store water for the dry season.
- Egypt had two distinct regions
  - Upper Egypt in the south
  - Lower Egypt in the north
- Upper Egypt went from the first cataract (waterfall) of the Nile northward to within 100 miles of the Mediterranean.

- Lower Egypt covered the delta region where the Nile empties into the Mediterranean.
- Delta is a triangular area of marshland formed by deposits of silt at the mouth of some rivers.
- 3100 BC - Menes (king of Upper Egypt) united the two regions.
- Used the highway linking north and south.

- River served as a trade route. Merchants traveled up and down the Nile.
- Pyramid Age
  - Divided into three main periods
  - Old Kingdom - 2700 BC - 2200 BC
  - Middle Kingdom - 2050 BC - 1800 BC
  - New Kingdom - 1550 BC - 1100 BC
- Power passed from one dynasty or ruling family, to another, but the land remained united

- Old Kingdom
  - Pharaohs (Egyptian ruler) organized a strong centralized state.
  - Claimed divine support for their rule
  - Egyptians believed the pharaoh was a god.
  - Pharaoh had absolute power, owned and ruled all the land.

- Pharaoh's took pride in preserving justice and order.
- Depended on a vizier (chief minister) to supervise the business of government.
- Various bureaus looked after matters such as tax collection, farming, and irrigation systems.
- Scribes carried out the vizier's instructions
  - Ptah-hotep trained young officials
  - *Instructions of the Visier Ptah-hotep*



- Old Kingdom is sometimes called the Pyramid Age.
- Egyptians build the majestic pyramids that still stand in Giza (near Cairo)
- Pyramids were tombs for the kings. Egyptians preserved the bodies of their dead rulers and provided them with everything they needed in their lives.
- Workers hauled limestone blocks that weighed an average of two and a half tons each.

- Pharoah had their people start building their tombs as soon as they inherited their throne.
- Thousands of farmers worked on the pyramids when they weren't planting or harvesting crops.

- The Middle Kingdom
  - Power struggles, crop failures, and the cost of building the pyramids contributed to the collapse of the Old Kingdom.
  - Century of disunity
  - New pharaohs emerged to reunite the land.
  - Turbulent period
  - Nile wasn't rising regularly

- Corruption and rebellion were common
- Strong rulers organized a large drainage project, created vast stretches of farm land.
- Armies occupied part of Nubia (gold-rich land to the south

- Traders had greater contacts with the people of the Middle East and the Mediterranean island of Crete.
- 1700 BC - foreign invaders - Hyksos occupied the Delta region.
- Egyptians adopted the horse-drawn war chariots from the Hyksos.
- Hyksos adopted Egyptian customs, beliefs, and names.
- Hyksos dominated Egypt for more than 100 years.

- Egyptian Empire
  - New Kingdom
  - Powerful and ambitious pharaohs created a large empire.
  - The Egyptian empire reached the Euphrates River. Brought Egypt in greater contact with the Middle East as well as other parts of Africa.

- Queen Hatshepsut
  - daughter of a pharaoh and a widow of another.
  - Began by ruling in the name of a male heir too young to take the throne.
  - She declared herself pharaoh and won the support of key officials.
  - Donned a false beard as sign of authority.
  - Reigned from 1503 BC to 1482 BC

- Hatshepsut encouraged trade with eastern Mediterranean lands.
- Ships went to Punt where they brought back ebony, ivory, spices, leopard skins, live monkeys, incense, medicines, and myrrh tree.



- Ramses II
  - won fame for military victories
  - 1290 BC - 1224 BC pushed Egyptian rule northward through Palestine to Syria.
  - boasted of his conquest on temples and monuments.
  - Egyptians and Hittites signed a peace treaty.
  - After Ramses II - Egyptian power declined.

- Assyrians and Persians conquered the Nile region.
- Greek and Roman armies marched into the rich Nile Valley

# Egypt and Nubia

- The Nile kingdom of Nubia developed in the shadow of Egypt.
- Egyptians traded or fought with Nubia.
- Egyptians acquired ivory, cattle, and slaves.
- Conquered Nubia during the New Kingdom.
- Nubians served in Egyptian armies and left their mark on Egyptian culture.

- 750 BC - Nubian kings marched north and added Egypt to their lands.
- Nubian kings ruled for 100 years and stretched their empire from Sudan to the Mediterranean.
- 650 BC - Assyrians armed with iron weapons, descended on Egypt and pushed them back.

## Inside the Great Pyramid of Khufu

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